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ABSTRACT

This study, based on interviews and classroom observation, evaluates what seven fifth-grade teachers in California did one autumn when a controversial new state-approved social studies textbook arrived at their doors. By tracking the teachers' daily curriculum decisions for social studies during the first few months following receipt of the textbook, the study examined if and how the new textbook really mattered in their instructional choices. Analysis is focused on five categories of factors: (1) teachers' educational experiences and professional affiliations; (2) their normative views about the goals of social studies education; (3) their evaluation of the needs and abilities of their students; (4) characteristics of their schools and classrooms; and (5) daily relationships between teacher and students within a class. The study concluded that individual differences among teachers make a significant impact on how the teachers respond to external changes such as the arrival of a new text. Teachers who viewed the textbook as their primary resource used the textbook to structure their planning, but others did not. Reformers' hopes that a new textbook written to the specifications of a new curriculum framework would lead directly to improvement in the quality of the social studies curriculum may be ill-founded. (Contains 32 references.) (JDD)

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THE THUD AT THE CLASSROOM DOOR: TEACHERS' CURRICULUM DECISION MAKING IN RESPONSE TO A NEW TEXTBOOK (Draft 3/94)

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Introduction

Every few years the cycle of textbook adoptions winds to a close with the distribution of new tomes to thousands of classrooms around the state. Weighty, glossy, and imposing, the new social studies textbooks arrive with a thud at the threshold of teachers and students. At this point the work of the politicians, the writers, the consultants, the publishers, the salespeople, and all the others involved in producing the new text is over. But the work of the teacher has just begun. What do teachers do with a new social studies textbook, and why do they do it? These simple questions lead us to considerations of teachers' roles as classroom curriculum planners and of the relationship between external curriculum policies and classroom practice.

The arrival of a new text can be seen as a critical juncture in a teacher's curriculum planning. As such, it is an occasion to examine teachers' thinking about teaching a specific subject matter. Teachers must make judgments about how and when to use these new curriculum materials with the students in their classrooms. They must, in the words of Miriam Ben-Peretz (1990), evaluate the "curriculum potential" of the new materials. This is particularly true at the elementary level where teachers have little direct voice in the selection of a new text, but where they have a fairly high degree of autonomy over the curriculum enacted within their classrooms. From the teachers' point of view, texts arrive periodically with the expectation that they do something with them. This study is the story of what seven teachers did one autumn when a new social studies textbook arrived at their doors.

In this study I examine the social studies curriculum of seven fifth grade teachers in one school district in California. Each of the teachers in the study had just been issued the controversial new state-approved textbook for the social studies America Will Be published by Houghton Mifflin (Armento, Nash, Salter, & Wixson, 1991). By tracking these teachers' daily curriculum decisions for social studies during the first few months following receipt of the new textbook I wanted to see if--and how--the new textbook *really* mattered in their instructional choices.

By talking with teachers about their instructional decisions about social studies during a time of change, I hoped to get a better understanding of teachers' priorities and practices in social studies teaching. I wanted to understand the web of factors they considered as they designed social studies lessons, and how they balanced the inevitable dilemmas of classroom teaching. In our repeated conversations, I wanted to gain a perspective on their views towards both curriculum change (as embodied in the new text) and stability. Social studies is merely a piece of what they do all day. My questions deal with how they managed change in this piece, reconciling it with their previous social studies agenda and overall classroom practice.

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Teachers as Curriculum Decision Makers

Over the past decade or so there has been an increasing interest in educational research efforts to better understand and support the professionalism of classroom teachers. Research on teacher planning (e.g., Clark & Peterson, 1986; McCutcheon, 1981), teachers as curriculum decision makers (e.g., Ben-Peretz, 1990; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988), teacher knowledge (e.g., Shavelson & Stern, 1981; Wilson, Shulman, & Richert, 1987), and teacher beliefs (e.g., Hawthorne, 1992; Prawat, 1992;) have converged to create an image of teachers as autonomous curriculum decision makers who ultimately determine the knowledge and experiences to which students will have access in school.

Awareness of the teacher's role in curriculum decision making is not new (see Cronbach, 1955), but neither are concerns that an "excess" of individualism could jeopardize the quality and continuity of the curriculum. Generally, over the past century the dominant trend in curriculum policies has emphasized prescription, and a striving for equality and consistency in education through the use of standardized text materials. Yet there has always been an awareness that the curriculum enacted in the classroom is mediated by teachers (McMurray & Cronbach, 1955; Tanner, 1988). Teachers' involvement in the curriculum has been alternately seen as wellsprings of inconsistency and as a potential sources of innovation and creativity in tailoring classroom instruction to the particular needs of the students gathered there. Textbooks have been credited with a powerful role in shaping the elementary school curriculum (particularly in social studies) yet there has been little classroom-level research on the perceived dominance of the textbook on the social studies curriculum.

Research on Texts and Teaching in Elementary Social Studies

The dominant image of elementary social studies is one in which students are led by a teacher through the textbook. In this view, teachers use a limited range of pedagogical strategies, focused on reading the text and answering the questions at the end of the chapter. Each chapter is taught sequentially and in essentially the same way. This impression was fortified by curriculum research conducted by the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Case Studies in Science Education project during the 1970s (Shaver, Davis, & Helburn, 1980; Stake & Easley, 1978; Weiss, 1978). More recently a survey of social studies instructional practices in over 1200 first through third-grade teachers in the midwest also found that the text "dominates primary social studies instruction" (Finkelstein, Nielson, & Switzer, 1993 p. 68).

An in-depth study of twelve elementary school teachers' planning by Gail McCutcheon (1981) and associates at about the same time as the NSF studies supported the claim that textbooks were the primary curriculum resource for most teachers. In one of the three school districts in that study, teachers were overtly told to follow the textbook, but in all three systems, "teachers generally relied on textbooks as the basis for their class" (p. 57). Thus even without a specific mandate to follow the text, teachers' use of them suggested that "texts provided a sense of security about what to teach, and [school] policies reinforced their use" (p. 57). McCutcheon concluded that "in all school systems that were a part of this study, then, social studies was derived almost exclusively from the textbook" (p. 58).

These finding were corroborated by John Goodlad's well-known 1984 Study of Schooling that involved observations of the teaching of various subject matters in over 1000 classrooms across the nation in the early part of the decade. Commenting on the results of this study, Francis Klein (1989) remarked that despite efforts to promote inquiry-oriented teaching and the production of a great many innovative curriculum materials, "something seemed to have happened which mediated those influences and produced a much more conforming curriculum". Their evidence showed that intended curriculum and actual classroom practices were "depressingly" the same from school to school and classroom to classroom (pp. 35-36).

Studies such as these are commonly cited as evidence that elementary social studies has been and is taught irregularly and relatively unimaginatively (e.g., Shaver, 1989; Thornton, 1991). However, alternative visions of social studies have always existed. In these views, teachers use a variety of materials and learning modalities to teach social studies. Examples of innovative curriculum materials and pedagogical techniques fill the pages of journals such as Social Education and pack the exhibition halls of teacher and subject matter conferences. Smaller scale, observational research on elementary social studies is also accumulating to suggest that the subject can be and is being taught more variously than the National Science Foundation, McCutcheon, and Goodlad studies suggest, and that the textbook does not exert as much influence over the curriculum as some policymakers seemed to have assumed (e.g., Brophy, 1992; Stodolsky, 1988).

Perhaps the most widely known study of elementary social studies teaching was undertaken by Susan Stodolsky (1988) in the late 1970s. Intrigued by differences in pedagogy attributable to subject matter, Stodolsky conducted a study of social studies and mathematics teaching in 39 fifth-grade classrooms. Using a detailed observational protocol, she coded instructional patterns and practices for teachers teaching the two disciplines and concluded that subject matter does indeed exert a significant amount of influence on teachers' choice of pedagogical strategies. For instance, students undertook much more seatwork in mathematics than in social studies. Teachers also used a much wider array of instructional media and techniques in social studies than mathematics, and they covered a much more diverse range of topics. The image of diversity painted in this tightly-focused investigation of social studies runs counter to the prevailing impression presented by the large-scale survey studies (e.g., Goodlad, 1984; Stake & Easley, 1978).

Stodolosky (1989) returned to a subset of the data she had collected for the original study to investigate differences in the use of textbooks and other instructional media and to compare classroom use with the instructional focus of the teacher's edition of the text. Somewhat tentative in nature (considering both that she had not initially gathered data to support all of her new questions and her sample of teachers used a wide variety of different text materials) this second analysis suggested that while textbooks are frequently used in some elementary social studies classrooms, their influence is not nearly as pervasive or uniform as had earlier been assumed. In mathematics, for example, Stodolsky found that the text seemed to represent the maximal content coverage. In social studies, topics not in the text (such as current events) were often regularly included in the curriculum. On the other hand, when the text was in use in a social studies class, the sequence of topics was rarely altered as it often was in mathematics.

Overall, Stodolosky's research suggested that the predominant image of a textbook-driven social studies is overdrawn. She concluded that more research was needed on the relationships between the presence of texts in a classroom and the ways in which they were used for teaching students about their world. She attributed the variations in practice she observed to teachers' own convictions and preferences about teaching and learning, the nature of the materials they used, the school context in which they taught, the particular students in their classes, and the subject matter and grade level they were teaching. This combination of personal and contextual variables seemed to support a wide variety of teaching styles with respect to instructional materials. At the end, however, she concluded that a great deal remained to be learned about what the presence of texts in a classroom implies about how teachers teach and what students learn.

Stodolsky's comparison of instruction and text use between mathematics and social studies was one of the first to focus on variations in pedagogy attributable to subject matter. Continuing that line of inquiry, reading specialists Jeanne Chall and Susan Conard (1991), recently looked at the use of the textbook in both high school and elementary social studies as part of a larger study of teaching with texts. First they conducted a nationwide survey of teachers' attitudes towards texts and then conducted more intensive observations and interviews in over one hundred classes. In elementary social studies, nine classrooms in each of fourth and sixth grades were observed. The researchers noted that the most frequently used pattern of textbook use involved what they called the directed-lesson and the multiple-resource approaches. Teachers, especially in the fourth grade and lower-achieving sixth grade classes, tended to structure or direct the reading of students through the text. Overall, they found that elementary school teachers viewed subject matter textbooks as a means to develop and reinforce reading skills as well as to teach content. Correspondingly, teachers devoted considerable direct instructional energy to the processes of reading and gathering information from textbooks. Chall and Conard found that suitable reading level was a "vitally important" criterion with respect to a new text--more so than features like its design, teaching aids, organization, or even its content or concepts. According to this research, these elementary teachers' decisions about texts are thus considerably influenced by their beliefs about students' reading abilities, and their beliefs about the functional role texts can play in improving students' literacy skills.

Design of the Study

In this study I look at the social studies curriculum of seven teachers who had just been issued new state-approved textbooks for the subject. The teachers all taught fifth grade in the same large urban school district. Because of my interest in analyzing variations in how they first interpreted and used these new text materials, the study was focused on the teachers' first months of use. Data were gathered through weekly interviews with seven teachers which focused on how and when they taught social studies, and how and when they used the textbook. The teachers had been invited to join the study on the basis of the characteristics of the schools in which they taught (such as being a magnet school). No effort was made to select teachers who had been pre-identified as exceptional in any way. The teachers all kept daily logs of their social studies activities and weekly interviews provided

opportunities for the teachers to explain why they did what did, and how their curricular decisions fit with their overall conceptions of what fifth grade social studies can and should entail. These weekly interviews were preceded by a lengthy initial interview and took place over the period of seven weeks between November and December 1992. Follow-up interviews were then held with each teacher in February and May. In addition I observed each teacher teach at least two times during the fall of 1992.

Analysis

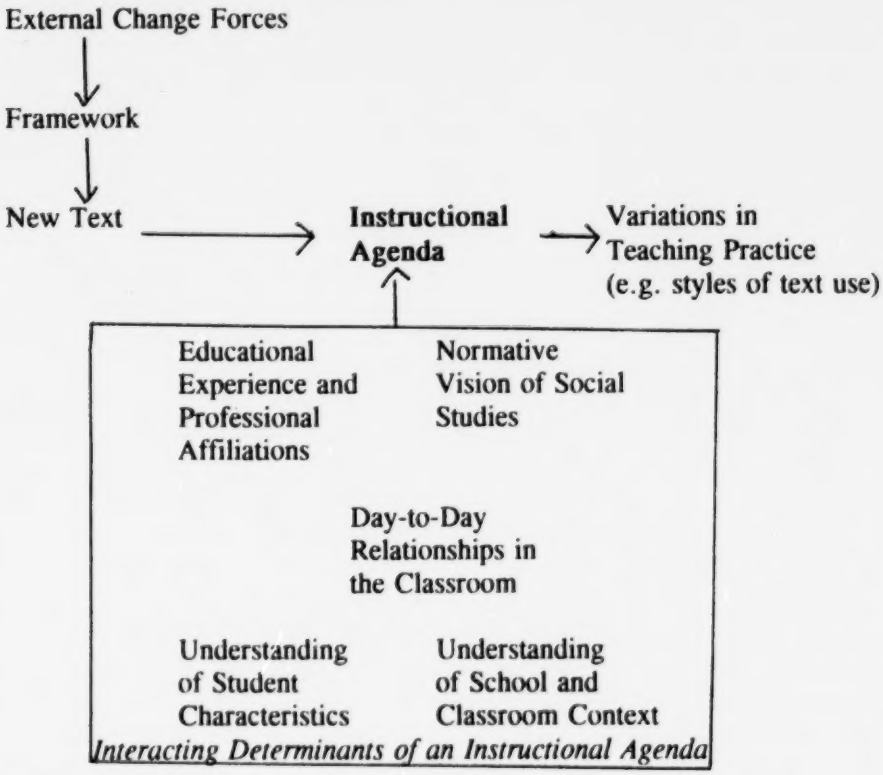
The central feature of the conceptual model used to analyze this data focuses on the key role of teachers' "instructional agendas" for social studies in the decisions they make about the textbook in their curriculum. In contrast to linear or top-down models of curriculum change which tend to assume that curriculum changes proposed from the "outside" will lead directly to changes in instruction, this model focuses on the intersection of the new text with the teacher's prior agenda for the social studies.

A fundamental aspect of the framework is that the newly arrived text in the experienced teacher's classroom does not encounter a *tabula rasa*. As Penelope Peterson (1990) commenting on California's mathematics reform put it, "the pedagogical slate is never clean." The teacher has an established social studies instructional agenda in which he or she has already defined a role for the textbook (among other things). These basic styles of textbook use are critical in determining the reception the text receives when it crosses the threshold of the classroom and the ways in which the text is subsequently used. Since texts are such a ubiquitous feature of the curriculum landscape of elementary schools, nearly all teachers have clearly formulated ideas about the role of texts in the teaching of the subject matter. They may have decided to use them extensively or not to use them very much at all, but they *have* thought about texts and formed a general opinion about their use. Similarly, most teachers have also formed opinions about such things as the use of groupwork, formal evaluation, and projects for social studies. Such determinations structure the instructional agenda of the teacher, and subsequent inputs (such as a new text) are evaluated in light of these decisions.

I selected the metaphor of an agenda because it suggests two images that I think are significant in teachers' curriculum planning: the sense of having overall goals that guide the teaching enterprise, yet the capacity for flexibility and reordering as circumstances warrant. An instructional agenda, like the agenda of a well-run meeting, keeps the enterprise on-task, provides a sense of direction, and is comfortably routine, yet it is amenable to modification and re-prioritization as new facts or situations are brought to the table.

The analysis of the basis of these teachers' social studies agendas was initially focused on four categories of factors (a) their own educational experiences and professional affiliations, (b) their normative views about the goals of social education and how best to teach it, (c) their evaluation of the needs and abilities of the students in their classes, and (d) the characteristics of the schools and classrooms in which they worked. A fifth factor, the day-to day relationships between teachers and students within a class, also emerged as a significant influence during the analysis. A conceptual model of these relationships is presented in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Factors that Set the Instructional Agenda


External Change Forces
Framework
New Text
Instructional Agenda
Variations in Teaching Practice (e.g. styles of text use)
Educational Experience and Professional Affiliations
Normative Vision of Social Studies
Day-to-Day Relationships in the Classroom
Understanding of Student Characteristics
Understanding of School and Classroom Context
Interacting Determinants of an Instructional Agenda

Results

From the first, it was apparent that these teachers had very different conceptions of the social studies, their roles as teachers, and what students could and should learn in fifth grade social studies. In addition these seven teachers, while all teaching in the same district, all had different local teaching contexts that influenced their decision making about social studies. Even teachers working in the same schools found that variation in the ability levels of the students they had been assigned to teach influenced their decision making. The result was that the social studies teaching of these seven was much more variable than might be expected given that they were all teaching from the same textbook, based on the same framework, in the same grade level, in the same district. It appears that the text does not encounter a *tabula rasa*, and that teachers' prior agendas are significant in how teachers perceive and receive a new text. This finding challenges the assumption that the teaching of elementary social studies is relatively homogeneous and that it is homogeneous (in part) because teachers do not really care about it. It appears from this analysis that teachers' instructional agendas do matter in what gets taught; the new text encounters a prior agenda and like a prism this results in variations in teaching A summary of each teachers' background, teaching situation, and initial textbook use is presented in Appendix 1.

How Teachers Used the Text

Interviews with and observations of these teachers revealed three basic dispositions towards use of the text. Two of the teachers, Hank and Rachel, used the text as their Primary resource in curriculum planning for social studies. The text was the curriculum. Not only did they allow the text to structure the content and the pacing of the curriculum, they also relied heavily on the supplemental materials, such as worksheets, that accompanied the texts. These teachers used the end-of-chapter examinations that were provided with the text series and oriented their teaching around helping students succeed on those exams. Like the mathematics teachers cited in Stodolsky (1988), Hank allowed the text to represent the maximal range of his social studies teaching. He taught what was in the book and only what was in the book, though occasionally he modified its suggestions to better fit his teacher-centered pedagogical style. In one instance, for example, he converted an assignment for students to interview an immigrant to this country into a whole class discussion of what they would find out if they did do such an interview. Students in Hank's class could expect with a high degree of certainty that during social studies classtime they would be using their texts (over 95% of social studies instruction involved use of the text, publisher's worksheets or publisher's tests). Rachel used a wider variety of media and pedagogical strategies to teach students what they needed to learn to do well on the text-based examinations, thus while the text defined the curriculum in her room, it was not the sole teaching resource in Rachel's class as it was in Hank's class. But she clearly saw the text as the curriculum she was supposed (like it or not) to teach.

> If this is the curriculum that I am supposed to do, then I feel a responsibility to do this....Somebody decided that was the most important. And who am I to say that it's not? (Rachel 5/25/93)

Two other teachers, Marlene and Sibyl, in contrast, appeared to view the text as an Active but not primary resource in their curriculum. They had read the curriculum framework for social studies themselves and had pre-established their curricular goals for the year. When they received the new texts these teachers they mined them to find ways that they could aid them in acheiving their curricular objectives. The texts were in their "top-drawer", and were one of the first resources they turned to as they planned instructional activities. Unlike Hank and Rachel they did not rely heavily on either the supplemental materials that came with the text nor the publisher-provided examinations. They were also more selective about projects or questioning strategies suggested in the teachers' edition of the book and freer about picking and choosing which sections of the text to use. As Stodolsky found in her study of texts in elementary social studies, these teachers did tend to teach topics in the same sequence as they were presented in the book. But often the instructional emphases were modified to meet the teachers' perception of what students needed to learn. Sibyl for instance preserved the order of the information in the text to help her teach a unit that compared the Revolutionary and Civil War periods, but the unit design was hers--the text merely was a handy resource for her to use with her students.

Finally, two of the teachers, Gwen and Beth, appeared to view the text as a Limited

resource in planning their social studies curriculum. Both teachers believed that social studies can and should be taught more authentically through the use of other media and learning experiences. In addition both teachers appeared to find curriculum planning for social studies a personally exciting intellectual challenge. Neither teacher thought that the book was very useful to them in teaching the type of social studies they believed their students needed and neither wanted to use the text "as their main source of learning" (Beth 2/18/93). Their prior instructional agendas accorded a limited role to textbooks, and their initial classroom experiences with the new text reinforced this predilection. This is especially true in the case of Beth whose class was predominantly limited English proficient (LEP). She attempted to use the text once early on in the year and deemed the experiment a "total disaster." Thereafter her sole use of the text was as a reference book for the various projects (such as a newspaper account of the voyages of discovery) that the students undertook. In Gwen's case, her commitment to integrate subjects within her class clearly influenced her curriculum decision making with respect to the textbook. Valuing integration she placed much more instructional emphasis on trade books and reference materials rather than the text. Repeatedly citing the new California literature framework's charge to teach "Into, Through, and Beyond," (CSDE, 1987) Gwen blended literature and social studies throughout the day, "so when we're doing reading, quote unquote, or language arts we're actually doing social studies together" (11/5/92). During our conversations Gwen almost never mentioned a learning task that was not explicitly designed to teach two or more subjects simultaneously.

The seventh teacher in the study, Brenda, is interesting because she appeared to shift in her style of text use during the year. Her shift reveals some of the necessary interplay between the influences of school context, teacher beliefs about student learning, and the day-to-day relationships within a classroom. Brenda had never before taught fifth grade and she had been assigned the class at a new school only a few days before the start of the term. With little time to prepare and limited knowledge about fifth graders (she had previously taught K-3), her social studies curriculum in the fall was as closely linked to the textbook as Hank's was--despite her belief that students need hands-on activities to learn a subject as abstract as social studies and that factual history was a relatively unimportant component of elementary social education. She used the text because it was there. Brenda also used it as a tool for classroom management during the early months of the year when students were actively challenging her authority in the classroom. Two of the three times I observed in the fall a whole-class interactive activity based on the text was abandoned in the face of student misbehavior and students were instead made to read the text and answer questions at the end of the section individually and silently at their desks.

As Brenda got more familiar with her class and her day-to-day relationships with them improved, and she had more time to locate appropriate alternative materials, the precedence of the text in her social studies curriculum waned to occupy a position that was more consistent with her overall instructional philosophy. She oriented her curriculum around a simulation exercise on the Colonies and merely used the text as a supplement. It was still a "top-drawer" resource but it no longer determined the pace and content of instruction, nor was her teaching focused on preparing students to succeed on the publisher-provided examinations. "I just found that I had to teach this the way I know how to teach" (12/14/92).

Why Teachers Used the Texts as They Did

One of my motivations in conducting an interview based study was not merely to document that elementary social studies teaching is more diverse than it is frequently portrayed, but also to begin to unpack the "black box" of these teachers' agendas for social studies and inquire into the features that undergird teachers' instructional decision making. I therefore asked them questions about: their experience and professional affiliations, their normative visions of elementary social studies, their understanding of their students' characteristics, their understanding of their teaching context, and their day-to-day relationships with students in their classrooms. Brenda was most eloquent in detailing the conflicts between her overall vision of what social studies should be and what she found possible to accomplish in a new setting with new challenges and demands on her teaching skill. But the other teachers also appeared to interpret and make accommodations to the new text based on their prior agendas for social studies as well. What they believed about social studies, how students learn, and what was possible and practical to attempt in their teaching environments clearly channeled their initial responses to the new text. Student reactions to the text and the enacted curriculum also had an influence. Below I briefly describe some of the factors that appeared to be most salient in the teachers' decision making.

Educational Experience

There was no clear relationship between number of years of teaching experience and textbook use--the less experienced teachers did not seem more disposed to use a text as the basis of their curriculum than the more experienced teachers. In fact Hank, Rachel, and Marlene were among the most experienced teachers in the study, and they used the text quite heavily, while Beth and Brenda were the least experienced, and were the least favorably disposed towards its use.

University experience also seem to be an inadequate source of explanation of the differences in the enacted curriculum. In contrast to the secondary school teachers in the Knowledge Growth in Teaching studies (e.g., Wilson, Shulman, & Richert, 1987), experience with a university subject matter seemed to have little relationship to teachers' views about what to teach in elementary social studies. Most of them seemed to feel that "..it was a long time ago, I don't remember" (Rachel 11/4/92). When asked about their majors, they seemed to feel that they were irrelevant to their thinking about their social studies curriculum. None of the seven teachers had majored in history, and whether a teachers' social studies focus was on conveying factual knowledge, or thinking skills, or affect, seemed unrelated to university subject matter preparation. This ambivalence to their university or college subject matter preparation is probably due to the fact that these teachers teach elementary school. Unlike secondary teachers who tend to define themselves by the subject they teach--a history teacher, a math teacher, a language teacher--these teachers seemed to define themselves by the grade level they teach.

Similarly, none of the teachers remembered, or cited, any references to their teacher education programs with respect to what to teach in social studies. Beth was the only teacher

in the study whose teacher training took place at the same time as the new curriculum reforms were coalescing in the late 1980s. It may be that her orientation towards thematic-indirect teaching in general originates in some of the same forces that spawned the new text, but there appeared to be no direct relationship to her views about social studies teaching. Again this weak relationship is probably attributable to the fact that, as elementary teachers, these teachers' training was not very subject matter focused.

A much stronger point of reference for these teachers in terms of what should be taught in social studies was their own "apprenticeships of observation"--their own experience as students. These experiences tended to be vividly remembered and form a lodestone for the teachers. Rachel, for instance, continually cited her own Catholic school experience as her model for how she taught. Gwen, Beth, and Marlene, in contrast, all had memories of their school's social studies could be called "anti-models": models of what they did not want to do. Their motives in curriculum planning were influenced by their desires to not teach the way they were taught. Gwen recalls being "humiliated" in social studies class for challenging the teacher and Beth recalls

> The only thing I remember from fifth grade was making a three dimensional covered wagon, and the teacher saying only this and this student can work on it, because she wanted it to be perfect. (11/10/92)

Overall Marlene focused on the positive, project-based aspects of her elementary experience--yet she did remember with distaste one year, "when all we did was copying, copying, copying all the time off the board." (12/18/92)

Professional Affiliations

Consistent with the recent attention being given to ideas such as teacher networks (e.g., Lieberman & McLaughlin, 1992), the teachers' perception of their role as professionals, and their decisions about professional affiliations did seem to have an influence on their instructional agendas. Teachers choose what professional activities to get involved with, and these choices may be shaped by, and reinforce, a teacher's prior agenda. For example, it is probably not a coincidence that the teachers whose dispositions to indirect or constructivist models of teaching (Brenda, Beth, Gwen, and Marlene) were most favorable, were the teachers who were most active in educational organizations that went beyond the school or school district. These organizations were not focused on social studies instruction,[1] but they formed, in effect, supportive communities in which teachers could talk about reform ideas in

[1] None of the teachers in this study were members of the National Council for Social Studies, or any other social studies subject association like the National Council for Geographic Education.

education. Brenda's leadership in the whole language association, therefore, may have indirectly affected how she thought about the aims and processes of social education. Similarly, Marlene's work with the bilingual education project may have had spin-off effects on her decisions about what can, and should, be done in social studies. At the same time, Beth's decision to work with a group of five other teachers on a thematic social studies unit for the district brings her into contact with teachers who feel the same way she does about teaching through indirect methods and gives her a supportive community to talk about new ideas in education that she does not find at her school.

While not specifically a *professional* affiliation, another source of influence on these teachers' decision making about the content of their course that emerged during our conversations was the teachers' own extra-curricular activities with respect to social studies. For instance, both Gwen and Sibyl were personally active in the 1992 election campaigns, and found ways to bring these interests and understandings into the curriculum more explicitly than most of the other teachers in the study. This focus on the elections was one instance where the teachers were teaching a major goal of the framework--civic--participation, but not using the text to do so. Similarly, Marlene, Sibyl, and Gwen, frequently cited their travels around the country as inspirations for teaching practices.

Normative Visions of Social Studies

One of the most powerful sources of influence on pedagogical decisions is a teacher's beliefs about how students best learn social studies. Teachers have different ideas about what students need and can do. Part of the difference stems from the teachers' perceptions of the goals of social education, and their opinions about whether the subject should be knowledge-centered, skill-centered, or affect-centered. There were strong differences of opinion among the seven teachers on this point. Brenda, for instance, felt that

> If I could have my way (this is kind of radical) I wouldn't teach social studies through fifth grade. I would have it more social learning and spend a larger amount of time on class meetings and getting along with others, and becoming a responsible person, rather than teaching content they won't remember next year anyway (11/5/92).

While Rachel believed that "US history is very concrete. It's what has happened" and that the best way to teach it was to "teach the basic highlights put into terminology the kids can understand, and not try to educate them to be like college students" (5/25/93). Clearly these different perceptions contributed to the differences in how Brenda and Rachel ultimately used the text in the Spring. Brenda shifted away from a reliance on the text towards the use of a purchased simulation exercise on colonial settlement, while Rachel found to her dismay that she was "reading orally to them an awful lot" (5/25/93).

Another point on which the teachers' normative visions differed was in their orientation to value of direct instruction and an accretionist view of learning, versus indirect instruction and a constructivist view of learning. This is a conflict that can be illustrated by a

comparison of the positions of Rachel and Gwen.

Traditional Rachel believed that students need to learn through practice and repetition. She held that students need repeated exposure to skills to learn them, not only in social studies but across the curriculum. She worried, for instance, about the move away from such things as diagramming sentences in English, complaining that,

> I think that once they got away from diagramming sentences, and getting into some of the real nitty-gritty logistical types of things of writing they lost people. Some of these kids can be creative in their writing and that's about the story. Their creativity is wonderful, but they can't spell, they can't punctuate, they can't do anything. All of that unstructure carries through to all of these subjects, including social studies (11/4/92).

Citing concerns about students' developmental levels Rachel was very concerned that the content and tasks that students face not be too advanced for them. She saw learning as sequential, and cumulative, and her job as the teacher was to structure tasks and questions that got students to think about the content in what might be defined as an intellectually safe arena.

Gwen, on the other hand, citing her experiences as a leader in staff development in the district, advocated an accelerated education for all. "You have to make them reach...and put it together for themselves" (11/5/92).

> I believe that I have to challenge my students with the type of work that I do in class--I consider it all GATE [gifted] work. Not according to the ability of my students, but what I think that they need to do, to do higher level critical thinking. Therefore, everything that I do is based on Bloom's taxonomy, and so I definitely think about that as I plan the curriculum. (11/5/92)

Student Characteristics

Chall and Conard (1991) found in their national survey of teachers' views that suitable reading level was the single most important characteristic to teachers about an elementary school textbook and this was certainly true for the teachers in this study. All of the teachers in this study spoke feelingly of the need to adapt the new text to the reading abilities of their students, and all of them felt that the new textbook was beyond the reading abilities of most of their students. While there was a range in average reading ability level among the classes in this study, ranging from Beth's "average third grade level," to Sibyl's "high ability readers," almost universally, the teachers in this study felt that the text was too hard for their students and they responded by either eliminating sections (or the use of the text altogether in Beth's case), or reading sections aloud to students and discussing them in a teacher-centered instructional style (as noted above for Rachel). Her response to the students' difficulty was to redouble her efforts in guided literacy whereas other teachers responded by minimizing the role of the text in the curriculum.

School and Classroom Context Considerations

Finally, school context has been shown by an ever-increasing tide of research to be a significant factor in determining both how teachers teach, but also how education change is perceived and supported or resisted (e.g., Lieberman & McLaughlin, 1992; Talbert & McLaughlin 1992). Recognizing the potential significance of local school context, I designed this study to enhance the probability of finding differences in the way that the new textbook was received in different schools. Therefore, while I selected a single district context, I selected five different schools within the district to participate. To increase the variability in the context, two of the schools were designated magnet schools. Magnet schools, it has been suggested, are significantly different from other schools because of their differential access to materials, spirit of school mission, collegiality of faculty, and so forth (Doyle & Levine, 1984).

Being a magnet school did not, *per se*, seem to have a direct impact on teachers' social studies decision making for any of the teachers except perhaps Beth. Marlene and Gwen at the science magnet, for example, did not integrate their social studies and science very much because the students were pulled out for science class with a resource teacher. The effect of being in the magnet, therefore, merely meant that Gwen and Marlene did not have to think about science. Similarly, being in a technology magnet did not have a clear impact on Hank's instruction. Hank's marginalization of technology in his social studies curriculum (he used a word-processor occasionally) provides evidence that being in a technology-rich environment does not ensure that technology will be integrated across the curriculum. At the same time Beth's affinity for teaching with technology may be as rooted in her professional background in computers and her basic educational philosophy as it is in her placement in a technology magnet school. The factors are clearly intertwined.

Time and Space Considerations

For Hank, the overriding context features that influenced his curriculum decision making were the open space nature of the classroom, and the fact that his students came and went through various enrichment or pull out programs. Not once over the course of the seven weeks of interviews did he fail to mention these factors and what he would like to have been able to do in another situation. His argument that the text was not appropriate to an open-classroom situation indicated that he was aware of the discrepancy between the vision of the reformers and his practice (he knew that he is not teaching fully in accord with the reform), but he felt unable to do otherwise. He read the suggestions for interactive activities in the text but argued that the text "...isn't written for an open space type classroom" and that "this book would've been successful in my first years of teaching when I did a lot of committee work, but I can't do it here" (2/10/93) While Hank felt the most constrained by architecture, both Marlene and Beth also felt that the open space architecture made teaching language-limited students, in particular, more difficult as was illustrated by this conversation I held with Marlene in December.

Me: Does the fact that you teach in an open classroom affect how you teach?

Marlene: Give me four walls please.

Me: Could you do a lot more if you had four walls?

Marlene: Yes, we could sing, I do a lot of singing, I think singing is a just a great therapeutic tool for the soul. There are wonderful patriotic songs in the fifth grade music book. And for cooperative learning we have to tone it down all the time. It takes the edge off the fun having to be so quiet all the time. And for the LEP's, here we're trying to help them to learn another language, and we want them to talk, but we can't let them talk because we have to keep them quiet because we don't have walls around. It just does not make a lot of sense.

Overall, in the allocation of time for social studies, these teachers did not seem overly disposed to reduce the amount of time spent on social studies in favor of other subjects. Gwen, Beth, and Marlene, in contrast, frequently spoke of cutting into language arts or mathematics time to finish a social studies projects. None of the teachers displayed the cavalier attitude towards social studies perpetuated by reports in the literature of teachers' saying "We'll get to it if there is time" (e.g., Shaver, 1989; Thornton, 1989).

School Administration and Community Involvement

Overall, the principals in the schools I visited were not seen as very involved in the teachers' curriculum decisions. Brenda tailored her instruction a bit at the beginning to perceived desires of the principal, but she was never actually told how to teach. Most teachers commented that felt no pressure on how they teach from the administration. The teachers also uniformly cited that they felt no pressures from parents or the community about their social studies instruction. They seemed to feel that designing their curriculum (within the constraints of the framework) was their responsibility. Three teachers, Hank, Sibyl, and Marlene did comment, however, that they suspected parents would be disappointed if they did not do state report projects. These projects are a common and long-standing feature of the fifth grade curriculum, and while neither the state framework nor the text makes mention of them, all of the teachers--but Beth and Brenda--undertook them this year.

Day-to-Day Classroom Experiences

While the school context in which they taught had some influence on the instructional agendas of the teachers, a more proximate source of influence on the teachers' decisions were the day-to-day relationships between them and their students. The teachers did not rely solely on their formal knowledge of the subject matter or pedagogy when setting their instructional agendas. They did not dispassionately assess the value of activities or teaching materials to evaluate their utility in the abstract. The teachers thought about, and discussed, their

teaching in a specific context to a specific group of students. They set up routines and (with the students) established a prevailing classroom climate.

All teachers seemed aware that their preferences for teaching certain ways were shaped and modified by student responses to their teaching. Often these modifications came from their assessment that the curriculum was too difficult for the students or that the students did not have the requisite background knowledge. Thus both Rachel and Hank, in finding that the students had difficulty reading the text, intensified the way they taught with it. Rachel, in particular, spoke of the conflict inherent in needing to become more teacher-centered in her pedagogy as she found students frustrated by the text. Her agenda was shaped her realization that her students needed more scaffolding and background information even if such teaching is not fully in accord with the reform. Beth, in contrast, responded to her students' difficulty by dropping use of the text altogether. A response that was consistent with other aspects of her instructional agenda such as her desire to incorporated more technology into her curriculum.

Section Summary

All of the factors described in the section above appear to be interrelated, and singly and in combination, appear to have an impact on teachers' instructional agendas and help shape their responses to a new text. What this analysis has revealed most plainly to me is that there is no single overriding factor that determines the reception a teacher will give to a new text and the use she or he will make of it in the classroom. Once again the diversity of classroom decision making defies simple categorization. One cannot blithely assume, for instance, that an inexperienced teacher will rely on a textbook (witness Beth), or that a teacher with a bilingual class will eschew it (witness Marlene), or that a teacher with good access to technological supplements will use them (witness Hank). The factors are complex and interrelated. Even teachers with similar beliefs about student learning and teaching philosophies appeared to respond differently to a new textbook in different teaching situations. More research needs to be done to untangle these relationships and determine how teachers accommodate changes in their instructional agendas. But given the priority that teachers placed on students' responses to their instruction, it appears that learning from experience--reflecting on the value of classroom experiences for their students--is a primary and, and perhaps necessary, pre-requisite to change.

Conclusions

The Houghton Mifflin text did not encounter a "clean pedagogical slate" in the classrooms of these seven teachers. The teachers' initial dispositions to text use--Primary, Active, or Limited--determined how they went about exploring the curriculum potential of the resource and the instructional decisions they made with respect to it. It therefore seems unwarranted to assume that changes in an instructional medium will have uniform effects on teachers whose initial instructional agendas are so varied.

Previous research on how experienced teachers plan for social studies teaching has

suggested that teachers tend to be quite dependent on their textbooks (e.g., McCutcheon, 1981), and that social studies is often not considered an important part of the elementary school day, and it therefore is frequently haphazardly planned (Brophy & Alleman, 1993; Shaver, 1989). I did not find that this was generally true in my study, and it certainly does not capture the *variety* of planning styles that I came across in this study. The teachers who viewed the textbook as their primary resource did use the textbook to structure their planning as McCutcheon (1981) suggests. They tended to plan in terms of sections of the textbook--when thinking about and planning for social studies, they pick up the book. Yet the other teachers did not.

The comparisons of these seven teachers' practice remind us that there is no "typical" elementary social studies teacher or standard way in which elementary teachers use their social studies texts. We all know from experience that teachers are not the same, yet educational policy tends to be written as though they were. The assumption seems to be that individual differences among elementary school teachers will not significantly impact how the teachers will respond to external changes such as the arrival of a new text. Yet this study serves as a reminder that such assumptions obscure a great deal of variation between teachers. This finding has implications for teacher education and teachers' professional development. Just as current learning theory suggests that teachers need to attend to students' prior knowledges and understandings and provide opportunities for them to construct new knowledge, it seems prudent to recommend that curriculum reformers attend more closely to teachers' prior knowledge and beliefs, and the ways in which their knowledge and beliefs are modified.

Many researchers who have studied educational change have concluded that instead of looking for the solution to educational deficiencies in things like improved textbooks, the road to reform involves more of what Linda Darling-Hammond (1993) calls "capacity building," and what Fullan and Miles (1992) call building the capacity for "continuous improvement"--ways to strengthen and support the ability of teachers and others in the schools to make ongoing decisions about educational practices in their schools. As analysis of the instructional agendas of these seven teachers has highlighted, teachers all encounter reforms (in this instance the thud at the door) from different places. But they are not only starting from different points of reference about what can and should be taught, the teachers' <u>own</u> learning styles and needs are also different. Thus while Rachel and Hank each asked for more inservice training in how to teach this new way, Brenda recoiled at the thought of more formal training. She wanted a group of teachers that she could meet with regularly to discuss the proposed reforms and the problems and successes she has in trying to implement them. Attention to the factors that undergird teachers' instructional agendas may shed light on teachers' preferences for different modes of professional development.

In many ways, this teacher-focused model of reform is more difficult and complex to implement than reforms focused on aligning texts and tests. Yet there appears to be a growing realization that the creation of structures and norms that nurture teachers' abilities to meet local needs may be a more fruitful avenue of reform than making changes in materials such as textbooks.

In sum, the arrival of the text is a critical juncture that calls upon teachers to employ their pedagogical reasoning skills. Analysis of the relationships between teachers' initial

instructional agendas for social studies and the new text suggests that the reformers' hopes that a new textbook written to the specifications of a new curriculum framework would lead directly to improvement in the quality of the social studies curriculum across the state may be ill-founded. While changes in the textbook might be a useful adjunct to curriculum reform (especially for some teachers), changes in texts are not sufficient in and of themselves and need to be supported by a wider array of reforms in teacher education, professional development, and context restructuring that affect how a teacher thinks about, and responds to, the unbidden arrival of agents of reform such as new textbooks.

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APPENDIX 1: Summary of Teacher Characteristics

	BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHING AND LEARNING	TEACHING CONTEXT AND STUDENT BODY	BELIEFS ABOUT SOCIAL STUDIES	USE OF TEXT
BETH 3rd career, 3rd year teaching. Worked in high-tech before. First year at this school.	Students need basic life skills, need to learn how to learn. Teaching needs to be thematic. Student-centered Teacher as Facilitator	Tech Magnet Open Space Largely Hispanic. Low achievement level. Over half LEP.	A vehicle for teaching "middle school survival skills." Focus on Skills	Only for reference. Students can't read it.
HANK 32 years in same school. Been through many educational reforms.	Students need regularity, and equal access to learning. Subject-centered Teacher as Conveyor	Tech Magnet Open Space Largely Hispanic. Several GATE students. Wide range of ability.	Students need to feel pride in heritage. Need facts and skills to be ready for middle school. Focus on Facts	Primary teaching resource. Used almost all the time.
MARLENE 25th year. Been GATE teacher, media specialist, taught all levels. Working on federal bilingual program now.	Need to keep up with changes in teaching (e.g. LEP, technology). School needs to be fun for students. Student-centered Teacher as Facilitator/ Conveyor	Science Magnet Open Space Half LEP, a few GATE. Most diverse class in the study.	Believes in depth on a few topics. Social studies should be fun and engaging. Focus on Attitudes	As a supplement for stronger students. And a resource for projects.

GWEN 20th year. First time 5th grade. Been involved in teacher training. Been a GATE specialist. On textbook selection committee.	Constructivist. Integrated learning. need to accelerate learning "make it all GATE work". Subject-centered Teacher as Facilitator/ Conveyor	Science magnet Open Space Most students at or below grade level.	Focus on critical interpretation Multiple perspectives. Groupwork Focus on Skills	Only for reference.
RACHEL 24th year. 4th year at the school. Mentor teacher.	Believes in progression and structure. Value of small steps/ scaffolding. Need to build skills. Subject-centered Teacher as Conveyor/ Facilitator	Non-Magnet Self contained. Middle to low achievement level. Has 40 students for social studies.	Social studies is and should be history. History is fixed. History is facts. Focus on Facts	Text determines the curriculum, If it is in there, she will teach it.
SIBYL 8th year. Has returned to teaching after raising a family.	School needs to be fun and relevant to students. Subject centered Teacher as Conveyor/ Facilitator	Non-Magnet Open Space Largely upper middle class. Students at grade level.	Loves history. History as stories. Need to develop pride in America. Focus on facts	Picks and chooses as she teaches. A "source of discussible ideas."
BRENDA 6th year. Previously taught in alternative school. This is first year with 5th grade. First year in traditional school.	"Meaning centered", whole language focus. Personal development of students is key. Student centered Teacher as Facilitator/ Conveyor	Non-magnet Self contained Lower achieving students in the school.	Personal development "who they are as people" Getting along with others and other cultures. History or factual knowledge are secondary Focus on Attitudes	In fall used it extensively. Became a supplement in the spring while she used Interact simulation.